

# RECLAMATION

*Managing Water in the West*

## DRAFT FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

# Arvin-Edison Water Storage District / Improvement District #4 Exchange-Facilitated Transfer 2010

## Draft FONSI-09-90

Recommended by:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Michael Inthavong  
Natural Resources Specialist  
South-Central California Area Office

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Concurred by:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Mike Kinsey  
Acting, Supervisory Natural Resources Specialist  
South-Central California Area Office

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Concurred by:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Laura Myers  
Chief, Resources Management Division  
South-Central California Area Office

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Approved by:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Acting, Deputy Area Manager  
South-Central California Area Office

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



U.S. Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Reclamation  
South-Central California Area Office

January 2010

## Introduction

In accordance with section 102(2)(c) of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended, the South-Central California Area Office of the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation), has determined that the approval for Arvin-Edison Water Storage District (AEWSD) to deliver 10,000 acre-feet (AF) of its Central Valley Project (CVP) water to Kern County Water Agency Improvement District #4 (ID4) is not a major federal action that would significantly affect the quality of the human environment and an environmental impact statement is not required. This Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) is supported by Reclamation's draft Environmental Assessment (EA) number EA-09-90, *Arvin-Edison Water Storage District / Improvement District #4 Exchange-Facilitated Transfer 2010*, and is hereby incorporated by reference.

## Background

In 2005, ID4 had surplus State Water Project (SWP) supplies and AEWSD, a Friant Division CVP contractor, was operating its groundwater extraction wells during a deficit water supply year. Subsequently, ID4 and AEWSD entered into an exchange program where ID4 delivered 10,000 AF of its SWP supply to AEWSD in 2005 and AEWSD agreed to return a like amount of water to ID4 at a later time.

Currently, the State of California is experiencing unprecedented water management challenges during the current and extended dry hydrology, which is now in its third consecutive year. The SWP is forecasting very low storage conditions in all major reservoirs. As a result, the SWP has declared only 40 percent allocation of their Table A supplies to their contractors for the 2009 contract year (March 1, 2009 through February 28, 2010) and has recently forecasted a 5 percent allocation for the 2010 contract year. In order to offset any effects due to its reduced SWP supply, ID4 is pursuing any available supplemental water supplies and has requested that AEWSD fulfill its obligation under their 2005 exchange program.

AEWSD has requested that Reclamation approve the delivery of 10,000 AF of its CVP water to ID4. The CVP water would be released from Millerton Lake and conveyed through the Friant-Kern Canal towards its terminus where ID4 would ultimately divert the water into its facilities.

## Findings

### Water Resources

Climate change is an environmental trend and for the purpose of this EA refers to changes in global or regional climate over time and is expected to have some effect on the snow pack of the Sierra Nevada and the run-off regime. Current data are not yet clear on the hydrologic changes and how they would affect the Friant Division of the CVP as well as other federal, state and local river operations within the action area. Water allocations are made dependent on hydrologic conditions and environmental requirements. Since operations and allocations are flexible, any changes in hydrologic conditions due to climate change would be within the respective operations' flexibility and therefore water resource changes due to climate change would be the same with or without the Proposed Action.

Under the Proposed Action AEWS D would have still have sufficient water supplies to meet their in-district water demands. CVP supplies made available for delivery to ID4 would be surplus to AEWS D's immediate operational needs. ID4 would use the water within its service area for groundwater recharge, municipal, industrial and/or drinking water purposes within its service area and approved places of use. If left in the groundwater subbasin, the aquifer immediately below ID4 would slightly benefit from the introduction of additional and better quality water.

The delivery of CVP water to ID4 would occur entirely within existing conveyance facilities and the Kern River, which would not be adversely impacted as the exchanged water must be scheduled and approved by Reclamation, Kern County Water Agency, and the Kern River watermaster. The normal operations of the conveyance facilities and obligations by the respective overseeing agency to deliver water to its contractors would not be impacted. No natural streams or water courses would be affected since no additional pumping or diversion would occur; therefore, no significant impacts would result from the implementation of the Proposed Action.

### **Land Use**

Under the Proposed Action, the delivery of 10,000 AF of its CVP supplies would still leave AEWS D with sufficient water supplies to meet their in-district water demands, so farmers dependent on water for irrigation would not be impacted and land use conditions within AEWS D would remain the same.

ID4 intends to use the CVP water for either groundwater replenishment, municipal, industrial, and/or drinking water purposes. Ultimately, the CVP water would supplement ID4's SWP supply and would not generate any new housing nor would it result in new permanent population growth that would exceed official regional or local population projections in its service area. Therefore, the Proposed Action would not have any significant impacts on existing land use.

### **Biological Resources**

Most of the habitat types required by species protected by the Endangered Species Act do not occur in the project area. The Proposed Action would not involve the conversion of any land fallowed and untilled for three or more years. The Proposed Action also would not change the land use patterns of the cultivated or fallowed fields that do have some value to listed species of birds protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. Since no natural stream courses or additional pumping would occur, there would be no effects on listed fish species. No critical habitat occurs within the area affected by the Proposed Action and so none of the primary constituent elements of any critical habitat would be affected.

The short duration of the water availability, the requirement that no native lands be converted without consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the stringent requirements for transfers under applicable laws will preclude any impacts to wildlife, whether federally listed or not.

### **Cultural Resources**

The Proposed Action is administrative in nature and involves redistributing water through existing Federal facilities and/or river. There would be no modification of water conveyance

facilities and no activities that would result in new construction or ground disturbance. There would be no significant impacts to cultural resources.

### **Indian Trust Assets (ITA)**

There are no tribes possessing legal property interests held in trust by the U.S. in the water involved with this action, nor is there such a property interest in the lands designated to receive the water proposed in this action. There are no ITA, Indian Reservations, or public domain allotments found within the water districts involved. The Proposed would not affect or interfere with the observation of religious or other ceremonies associated with ITA.

Approval of the Proposed Action would not involve any construction or modifications and would utilize existing conveyance facilities; therefore, activities associated with the Proposed Action would have no significant impacts on ITA.

### **Socioeconomic Resources**

The Proposed Action would result in a shift or reduction of energy use which would save AEWS the energy and cost associated with otherwise pumping groundwater. AEWS's ability to deliver 10,000 AF to ID4 still leaves the district with sufficient water supplies for its farmers, so agriculture-dependent business and jobs would not be impacted. With additional water to supplement its SWP supply, conditions in ID4 would remain the same as existing conditions. The Proposed Action would have no significant impacts to socioeconomic resources.

### **Environmental Justice**

The Proposed Action would not cause dislocation, changes in employment, or increase flood, drought, or disease. The Proposed Action does not propose any features that would result in adverse human health or environmental effects, have any physical effects on minority or low-income populations, and/or alter socioeconomic conditions of populations that reside or work near the Proposed Action. Therefore, there would be no adverse impacts to environmental justice.

Implementation of the Proposed Action would ensure the viability of water supplies in ID4; therefore, ensuring the viability of farm labor jobs and provide for drinking water to communities within the district. AEWS would still be left with sufficient water to meet its internal irrigation demand, thus maintaining agriculture as has historically occurred. The unemployment rate near AEWS suggests that any actions that maintain seasonal jobs should be considered a beneficial impact.

### **Air Quality**

Under the Proposed Action, the delivery of CVP water to ID4 would be done via gravity flow and/or pumped using electric motors which have no emissions. In addition, there would be no new construction or land disturbing activities that could lead to fugitive dust emissions and/or exhaust emissions associated with the operations of heavy machinery; therefore, there would be no significant impacts to air quality.

## **Cumulative Impacts**

As in the past, hydrological conditions and other factors are likely to result in fluctuating water supplies and this drives requests for water service actions. Water districts aim to provide water to their customers based on available water supplies and timing, all while attempting to minimize costs. Farmers irrigate and grow crops based on these conditions and factors, and a myriad of water service actions are approved and executed each year to facilitate water needs. Each water service transaction involving Reclamation undergoes environmental review prior to approval. In addition, the Proposed Action is a temporary approval; therefore, when added to other water service actions, the Proposed Action would not result in cumulative adverse impacts to water resources beyond historical fluctuations and conditions.

The Proposed Action, when added to other similar existing or proposed actions, do not contribute to significant increases or decreases to environmental conditions. The Proposed Action is temporary and was found to have no impacts on land use, biological resources, cultural resources, ITA, socioeconomic resources, and air quality; therefore, there is no contribution to cumulative impacts on these resource areas.

Slight beneficial impacts to environmental justice and water resources are within the historical variations and would not contribute to cumulative impacts. Overall, there would be no cumulative impacts caused by the Proposed Action.